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Works Officer Quizzed

Ex-ICA Aide Says He Got \$25,000 From U. S. Contractors in Laos

Associated Press

A former foreign aid official told Congress under oath yesterday that he had accepted cash, stocks and airline tickets worth a total of about \$25,000 from contractors for U. S. public works projects in Laos.

Edward T. McNamara of Tampa, Fla., made the disclosure to a House Government Operations Subcommittee.

His testimony will be turned over to the Department of Justice.

McNamara, public works officer of the International Cooperation Administration mission in Laos from October, 1955, until the end of 1957, said he received the gifts from the American-owned Universal Construction Co. of Bangkok and Vientiane.

The firm had contracts for construction and highways amounting to \$603,205.40. The witness named Willis A. Bird, a former U. S. Army major, and Gerald A. Peabody as partners in the concern, which operates also in Japan and Okinawa.

McNamara said he recommended an ICA-financed highway contract worth \$1,068,500 between Universal and the Laos government.

He also approved the transfer of \$1.5 million worth of highway machinery to the Laos Ministry of Public Works.

McNamara acknowledged that a \$10,000 check signed by Bird and submitted as evidence had paid for 646 shares of stock in the Canada General Fund, Ltd., on June 1, 1957.

He also acknowledged borrowing without repayment \$10,000 worth of Laos currency from Peabody.

He said the two had on two occasions bought airline tickets for McNamara's wife for vacation trips to Hong Kong.

McNamara also said he had sold his automobile to an employee of Universal for \$4460. After receiving half payment in cash, he testified he had been allowed to keep the car without making a refund on the down payment.

McNamara said it was his responsibility to sign certificates of work performance done by Universal under contract for the U. S. Government. He said plans and specifications were lacking and no formal checks had been made to see that the work was actually done.